

Socialist Worker Review

Incorporating THE WORKER

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**UNEMPLOYMENT - NEWS
- CONNOLLY IN THE SLP -
NOTES OF THE MONTH**



SOCIALIST WORKER REVIEW

CONFERENCE

APRIL 22-23

Socialist
Worker
Review

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SOCIALIST WORKERS REVIEW
24 Talbot Street
Dublin 1

THE RESPONSE to the first issue of *Socialist Worker Review* has been very encouraging. People from inside and outside the Socialist Labour Party have reacted enthusiastically to its attempt to discuss socialist ideas 'in a readable and understandable format.' To those who are still outside the SLP we say: *Join the Party*. It is the arena in which the most vibrant and meaningful debate and activity will take place for the foreseeable future.

But we also need to be clear about what sort of a party the SLP is at present. As we said in our last issue: 'Yet the SLP is not as yet a revolutionary party. It needs to match the many fine aspirations that are contained in its constitution with deeds. It needs to sort out many of the theoretical issues on how socialism is to be achieved in Ireland. Many comrades in the party still place considerable emphasis on the role of the parliament. Others do not see the validity or legitimacy of working in the trade unions to oppose the sell-outs of the bureaucracy.'

TENDENCY

That is why we need to develop a strong revolutionary tendency inside the Party in order to stimulate debate and steer the party toward the road of direct action and away from the electoral traditions of the Labour Party. In building such a tendency we are not aiming to wreck the SLP or to build a party within a party. We will give our full commitment to the SLP while aiming to influence it in a revolutionary direction. We will help to build the SLP, and in building itself, it will change. The tendency will bring together those who are working for this.

The supporters of this magazine aim to construct such a tendency. The first issue was published by former members and supporters of the Socialist Workers' Movement who had joined the SLP. Given the response to the magazine and the notion of a revolutionary tendency, the editorial board wish to extend its base and support throughout the SLP. To that end a conference is being called for all those who are in broad agreement with its general principles and the tone of the paper.

CONFERENCE

In general, we are for a revolutionary change which entails the smashing of the existing capitalist state. Such a change can only be instituted by the mass action of the working class rather than through manoeuvrings in parliament or isolated militarist action. It must be a revolution from below.

The only solution to the national question lies through the struggle for socialism—the fight against capitalism and imperialism must be linked. Only in that way can Protestant workers be broken from Loyalism.

We stand for the building of a rank and file movement in the unions which can open up the fight for union democracy and militant policies and provide an alternative leadership to the bureaucracy when necessary.

We stand for full liberation for women which can only be won if women themselves are organised and prepared to fight for their demands as part of the fight for workers' democracy.

Members of the SLP who find themselves in broad agreement with such principles and who are interested in developing a revolutionary tendency in the party are invited to attend this conference which will be held on the weekend of the 22nd/23rd April in Dublin. Details on the venue, agenda and format of the meeting are available from the address below.

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DUBLIN UNEMPLOYED, who are marching to Belfast, passing through Whitehall on their way North. (I.P. Photo.)

UNEMPLOYMENT. Fianna Fail told us they could solve it and 'get the country moving again.' It's a sham. Paul O'Brien spells out exactly why. On pages 12 and 13 he details the cold facts that show up the fake promises.

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Socialist Worker Review

Socialist Worker Review is produced by a group of members of the Socialist Labour Party. The magazine is published monthly and will argue for the following points:

Opposition to National Wage Agreements or wage restraint in any form and argue for the building of a rank and file movement in the unions to fight for union democracy and militant policies.

Support for the struggles of the unemployed and oppose redundancies and productivity deals.

Opposition to state repression and argue for trade union action to oppose repression.

Support for the women's struggle in all areas, economic and social.

A socialist answer to the national question based on the unity of the working class.

The supporters of the magazine will constitute the Socialist Workers Tendency.

Readers are invited to write articles, letters or comments and contribute to the development of a revolutionary tendency in the SLP.

Those who are in general sympathy with the magazine are invited to a conference to be held in the near future to work out in detail the policies of the Tendency.

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NOTES OF THE MONTH

NWA
NO WAY

FOR ALL the inconsistency and the limitations of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union leadership's stand on the proposed National Wage Agreement, they have pointed to one of the central faults in the Agreement in their current campaign. They said: "We are urging rejection of this Agreement because it is historic in its limitations on trade union freedom and could pave the way for State controls if left unchallenged."

Their objections hinge on the last part of the sentence—the State controls. Other kinds of "historic limitations" have never bothered them. In fact, their continual and voluntary acceptance of embargoes on all industrial action and their reliance on official procedures and the Labour Court have paved the way for new restrictions on trade union action. But those who would rightly point to their past recommendations for agreements, which included a complete ban on strikes, to debunk the ITGWU's present stand, could miss the point that some of the leaders may be genuinely trying to make now.

NEW AGREEMENT

For the new proposed National Wage Agreement contains a very dangerous precedent. The elaborate process that "allows" strikes for 2% is a potential blueprint for legislation curtailing all strikes. By specifying a whole series of procedures which must be gone through before industrial action can be taken, the agreement effectively imposes a 'cooling-off period' of at least 7 months. It also introduces a completely new measure whereby the majority of all those eligible to vote is needed for strike action rather than simply the majority of those voting. So, for instance, if 60 out of 100 members turn up to vote then 51 of them must vote for strike action before it can be made official. The 40 who don't vote are automatically counted as voting 'no'. Furthermore there must be a compulsory secret ballot to ascertain this majority.

Such measures can provide excellent guidelines for stimulating Gene Fitzgerald's thoughts on curbing unofficial strikes. They provide an extremely useful model to work on. But much more importantly, if such measures become the practice of trade unionists they will soon be 'trained' for the procedures and flavour of a strike curbing law. Just as the idea of the two-tier picket or the Employer-Labour Conference was once alien to the movement but is now the norm, so too these new procedures can gradually be imposed.



1974

Demonstration against the National Wage Agreement organised by the Dublin Shop Stewards Committee in January. The committee, composed of rank-and-file trade unionists from a wide variety of unions and jobs is continuing the fight for militant policies after the rejection of the wage agreement.

Of course, this Agreement is unacceptable for reasons that go far beyond the fears of trade union bureaucrats. That the cancer of National Wage Agreements is reaching spots sensitive to the bureaucracy tells volumes about what it has done to the movement as a whole already. Financially and politically the new NWA is contrary to the interests of the working class.

The value of the money terms depends on the rate of inflation. 7½% is predicted by the Government for 1978—project that into 15 months and our wage rises will have to meet (an official) 9.4% price rise. But predictions (especially Martin O'Donoghue predictions) are unreliable and better left to astrology. At present the Consumer Price Index is running at 9%. It may reduce to 7½% in later months. But it may not—according to the National Prices Commission itself "recent trends in prices support this optimism at least for the first half of 1978." Yet the proposed Agreement would run a full year beyond the first half of 1978 for many workers.

Besides, the prices experts cannot agree among themselves on how high or fast prices are rising. The State's National Prices Commission says inflation was 10.8% last year. The British-based Reward Regional Surveys says it was 13.4%. And the Consumer Price Index is an extremely unreliable guide for working class incomes.

The simple lesson from all this is that wage rises to cover us for the next year and a quarter must not be tied down to a figure that cannot be breached. Only free collective bargaining can allow workers to catch up with price rises as they occur and bite into our pay packets. It also allows us to recover the ground lost in previous Agreements.

However, the most serious effect of this and other wage agreements is undoubtedly political. They cut back on the autonomy the trade union movement has from the state and attempt to restrict

its actions to the straitjacket of rigorous procedure. By curbing the weapon of industrial action they have strengthened all the compromising elements in the unions.

This Agreement simply takes that process one step farther—it now attempts to impose guidelines for how the unions should organise themselves internally. For the moment, at least, the bosses have stepped on the toes of the ITGWU. Its leadership has rejected the new restrictions—precisely because they have felt the pressure from their own rank and file and need new room to manoeuvre. The Fenka case showed the ITGWU bureaucracy the manner in which the gap between themselves and the rank and file can lead to explosive situations. As a result they have become increasingly worried about the extensive resort to unofficial strikes and have felt the need to be able to lead such pressure themselves, now and then, if they are to maintain any credibility.

If the proposals are rejected, in no time at all the Employer-Labour Conference, or more direct overtures from the Government, will probably produce a slightly modified substitute. (And, no doubt, the ITGWU executive will find it happily acceptable—they are already simply demanding renegotiation of the current Agreement.) It is this second round that must be the occasion for a massive campaign by the SLP, with as much independent support as possible, against National Wage Agreements. Win or lose, this campaign must be continued beyond the second vote, as a drive by shop stewards, union activists and socialists to kill national bargaining stone dead, and to restore free collective bargaining.

Above all, should the present NWA proposals be defeated, the SLP must pull out all the stops, use all its influence to have substantial claims lodged, and fought for, during the 'no man's land' period before the next Agreement. Only in that way can we show that free collective bargaining is worth its salt.

NOTES OF THE MONTH

LA MON
AND AFTER

SENSELESS, OUTRAGEOUS! Most people shared the feelings of revulsion over the Provo bombing of the La Mon House which killed 12 people. We felt pity for the families and anger that the Provos had done it again. But the feelings of rage was numbed as we were inundated by the massive and hypocritical propaganda spewed forth by T.V., radio and press. Endless days of funeral speeches and condemnations by ministers, the Orange Order and politicians—by all those who supported the violence of the British Army and sectarian organisations all these years.

The La Mon bombing has shown us the hypocrisy of the government and the media. But it has also given the reactionaries the opportunities they wanted. It is for this reason the Provos should be severely condemned. Their elitist military campaign with its inevitable 'accidents' can only bring further attacks on the anti-imperialist population and further set back attempts to fight repression. The elitist campaign makes it harder for workers who want to fight the repression. But it makes it easier for the reactionaries and for British imperialism to squelch any resistance to its rule.

The calls for the re-introduction of the death penalty and internment now come every day. Jean Coulter, a Loyalist councillor, even suggested getting the R.A.F. to bomb out Catholic ghettos. The La Mon bomb only helps justify the violence which the British government continues to use against the anti-unionist population.

The La Mon bombing occurred in the context of a general escalation of Provo military activity over the past few months. That escalation is a slap in the face for Roy Mason and all those others who have boasted that they are "winning the war with the terrorists."

Any campaign must be seen in terms of its impact on state repression. It could be argued that the Provos' campaign, coupled with mass action by Catholics against the British-Unionist machinery of state repression, brought down Stormont. The fall of Stormont however was the culmination of the Provos' success. Since then repression has increased and reached a peak with the taking away of political status from Republican prisoners.

The level of resistance since the fall of Stormont has been mainly military compared to mass civil disobedience. Britain has responded to this lack of mass action against state repression by repairing and reconstructing its repressive state machine. It has gone about restoring the



Can the Bombing campaign force a British withdrawal!

U.D.R. and R.U.C. level of activity in the Catholic ghettos. The Provos' response to this is to simply substitute themselves for the people in a manner that has hindered mass action to defeat state repression. As repression grows the military campaign has been powerless to stop it.

Perhaps the main reason though why the military campaign continues is that the Provisionals, to judge from their publications, hope to force a British withdrawal by making the North economically unviable. Could the campaign bring this about? If we take a close look at capitalism we must answer the question in the negative.

The capitalist system does not have any specific points which would render the system as a whole vulnerable. In Northern Ireland capitalism remains intact, and therefore British imperialism stays. The productive sector remains unscathed from Provo attack. The retail sector, which is the main target of the bombing, is the narrow limited aspect of capitalism. And even small businesses pay more attention when they're making up their books to inflation, wage costs and the larger multiple retailers than they do to Provo bombs. Ironically, also, the campaign has kept out large multiple retailers thus slowing down the disintegration of the smaller shops in Loyalist areas which are the social backbone to right wing Loyalism.

We can also ask what would happen if, hypothetically, the North's economy went into crisis because of the bombing campaign. If this unlikely situation took

place would British imperialism be defeated? No, it would not mean the defeat of imperialist interests. Investment merely would pick up after some time. Mass unemployment would weaken trade unionism and new investors would seek easy profits. The system itself covers up scattered shutdowns or bombed-out premises and in the absence of a fight back by workers themselves the system returns to normal. This is the reality and it is in this light we must view the Provo campaign.

Armed resistance is only politics carried on by other means. Any armed struggle therefore must be an integral part of a struggle waged by workers themselves against the state power of the capitalist system. If it is not part and parcel of a working class struggle—who, as Connolly said, are the only ones who can overthrow imperialist rule—it is doomed to failure and can become a block on the road to defeating imperialism.

The Provisionals and their methods will exist however in the absence of any real alternative. It is up to socialists within the working class movement to build that alternative. The Provisionals are the direct response to conditions that exist because of British imperialist domination of the island as a whole. A standing army exists in the North to protect assets valued at £7000 million and profits about £1000 million a year. A bombing campaign will not change this situation, but working class action North and South can.

NOTES OF THE MONTH

U.S.A. Victory to the miners



Women miners -- strong for the union.

FOR MOST of those who are active in the Irish trade union and socialist movements, America has always been regarded as the heartland of the beast -- the beast of capitalism and imperialism. It has been predominantly seen as an affluent middle class society. In fact it is an image which has its mirror reflection in the dreams of right wingers that America is still the Land of Opportunities.

What was forgotten was the whole militant tradition of the Labour movement. Although lured for decades by a society which experienced continual economic growth and by a savage pro-boss trade union bureaucracy, that tradition has begun to re-assert itself once again in the form of the American miners. For over three months 160,000 coal miners have been on strike in what has become one of the most decisive struggles in recent labour history.

The strike by the miners must be seen in its broader context. In their drive to increase profits and to improve their competitive position, the American boss class has been attempting to reduce the living standards of the working class for a number of years now. This in itself is the direct product of the growing crises in world capitalism. That offensive on the American working class began with the weaker sections -- particularly public sector employees and women. Attempts to unionise council workers in Alabama have been ruthlessly smashed. Whole sections of public sector workers in New York have had their job security threatened.

TESTING

But sooner or later that offensive had to be directed against the big bastions of Labour. When the contract for the miners came up for re-negotiation, the bosses made it clear that not only were they going to "hold the line" against new claims but were interested in pulling back previous gains. Wayne Horvitz, the chief government labour mediator, described the situation: "Management is testing the relationship to see what it will bear. The Employers believe that for many years they have given away more than they should across the table to the unions and perhaps this is a good time to get it back."

The bosses had a lot going for them. The miners' union was deeply divided. Arnold Miller, who had originally been elected on a union reform ticket, sold out very quickly having once enjoyed the privileges of the bureaucracy. The bosses had also stockpiled coal in preparation for the regular contract negotiation. And they knew that a lot was at stake. Under Carter's energy proposals, coal output was to double by 1985 -- so there was a lot going for them if they could tame the miners.

WILDCAT

The major offensive of the bosses against the miners was on two fronts. They negotiated a contract with the union leadership that gave them the undisputed right to fire strike leaders or miners who "instigate" wildcat or unofficial strikes. And they attempted to withdraw significant concessions that miners had won in the past on the issue of health. The miners' union, the U.M.W.A., had won the right to company finance for health care which was controlled by the union itself. The new contract built on an earlier precedent and instituted deductions on income for such health care. Such deductions often amount to £350 from the annual wage. Furthermore the new contract allowed the company to opt out of the U.M.W.A. Health Funds and instead arrange health insurance with other private companies.

The issues of health care and safety and unofficial strikes are intimately related. American mining is extremely dangerous as the bosses continually put profits first. As a result two thousand miners have been killed on the job in the last decade. Every week, seventy-seven miners die from the black lung disease. The only defence miners have had in improving safety conditions has been the militant actions that rank and file union safety committees have been prepared to mount. As a result a tradition has long been established for what Irish bosses like to call "respect for the sacrosanct nature of the picket!"

Such unofficial strikes have been absolutely necessary. One of the biggest vic-

tories the American boss class -- with the aid of the trade union leadership -- has been that of tying up all union negotiation in a fantastically complicated and lengthy grievance procedure. As a result it may take an average of 44 weeks to process a grievance in the mines. It is only by resort to unofficial strikes that miners have not only kept their health but improved their conditions.

The miners have rejected the new contract by a 2 to 1 majority -- despite the pressure from the White House. They now face the provision of the notorious Taft-Hartley Act -- which is a model for government legislation against unofficial strikes. The miners have been ordered back to work for an eighty-day "cooling-off" period and Carter can also seek an order for a temporary seizure of the mines by the government in order to enforce such a measure. One measure of the obstacle the miners -- and the courage they have displayed -- can be seen in the attitude of the American trade union leadership. George Meaney, head of the biggest union federation, the A.F.L.-C.I.O., said: "If I was President I would seize the mines and lay down conditions that miners can accept." To that end he made it clear he would support strike breaking. The U.M.W.A.'s own leadership under Arnold Miller has repeatedly tried to sell updated and slightly modified versions of the contract. He has done nothing to lead and organise the strike. That task has fallen to the rank and file who have defied the police, leafleted other workers for support and put on mass pickets to stop supplies.

The U.S. miners' strike is a pointer to the possibilities and necessity for building rank and file movements. A union reform movement which dissolves itself once it changes a leadership inevitably leads to sell-outs. The struggle against the employers and for an open democratic union can only be sustained by a rank and file movement which establishes itself on a permanent basis and which provides an alternative leadership when necessary. The failure to build such a movement is one of the main problems for American miners during this struggle.

"If they come for us at night...."

ON MAY 25 the Labour Movement goes on trial. This is the attitude of the Liffey Dockyard workers, and it should be the attitude of all socialists and trade unionists. They face imprisonment under the Forcible Entry Act which for the first time is being used to threaten one of the oldest weapons in our movement's armoury -- the use of occupation to defend and further the interests of workers.

Kevin Doogan from Socialist Worker Review spoke to Danny Ryan, one of the central figures in the struggle of the Liffey Dockyard workers against the employers and against the state.

Q. How is the campaign against the Forcible Entry Act going?

Danny. Quite well. I'm just off the road from touring up and down the country. Strike support committees are being set up in most places. At the moment the trial seems quite far off so there isn't the same momentum. What we are doing now is sowing the grains for the future so it's important now that the committees be set up in all areas so that the basis is laid for a real national campaign nearer the time of the trial.

Q. What support are you getting from other members of the N.E.E.T.U.?

Danny. We are placing no particular emphasis on getting support from our own union. We feel that the whole labour movement is under attack. We want to approach workers as workers and drive the message home that if they come for us in the night they'll come for you in the morning. It is this message that has got over wherever a meeting was held -- in Sligo, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Ennis, Drogheda, Galway and Belfast.

Q. Have you had any trouble recently from the Special Branch?

Danny. Yes. They have made their presence known at every meeting. In Limerick they threatened to pull me in for 48 hours.



--Danny Ryan arrested after the occupation of the BTL offices.

Q. How do you mean?

Danny. I was waiting for one of the organisers of the meeting who was going to take me to the hall where the meeting was on. Two Branch men pulled up in a car in front of me, got out and showed me their identification and asked for mine.

When asked, I told them I was speaking at a public meeting that night. They said I might not be. "There are enough troublemakers in Limerick without you adding to them. We can take you in for 48 hours."

But I called his bluff. "Great," says I, "that will give us just the publicity we need." I was practically walking into his blue Avenger when they backed down and let us go without further hassle.

Q. You seem to be doing a lot of slogging to get the committees set up in the localities, but is there any national focus for them?

Danny. There are a number of suggestions being floated around. We had the idea of a rally in the Mansion House but it proved too expensive. We are also trying to get a pamphlet which des-

cribes a background to this struggle since 1975. We would also like to get the Trade Union Campaign Against Repression to push the idea that the Anniversary of Connolly of May Day have as its theme the Forcible Entry Act. At the moment these are still ideas but we definitely need a focus for activity as we get nearer to the trial.

Q. Is the attitude still the same that if you are found guilty you are going to jail?

Danny. Absolutely. I mean just look at it. If we walk down the steps and nothing is done about it the employers win a fantastic victory.

Danny takes out of his coat a well-worn copy of the Prohibition of Forcible Entry and Occupation Act 1971

From the state of the copy he must have it word perfect. He points to section 4:

"Nothing in this Act shall affect the law relating to acts done in contemplation of furtherance of a trade dispute within the meaning of the Trades Disputes Act, 1906."

Danny. O'Malley said at the time that this act would never be used against trade unionists. Now it's blatantly obvious that trade unionists everywhere are under attack. That's our attitude and the basis on which every committee is being set up.

The labour movement is going to pay the costs of the trial. If we win then in the short run they are going to pay the cost of our legal defence which will take the guts out of £2000. If we lose then in the long run the costs are greatly increased. Every worker who thinks of taking effective methods to fight back can feel threatened in the future.

That is why if we walk down the steps we are demanding stoppages in protest against the sentence and for the repeal of this Act. That's the task of each committee now to begin to build up that mood. It's the task of yours and every other publication that is political to bring home to all workers the threat that hangs over us!

We are making a start for the labour movement. For all our sakes we have to win.

NEWS

after the Coalisland Conference



A section of the attendance at the Coalisland Conference.

The support expressed in Coalisland for a move to end repression and to demand the withdrawal of British troops has initiated activities in several areas. Since Coalisland we have seen many demonstrations to support the prisoners. Most significantly, the members of the Ardoyne Relative Action Committee have organised an anti-repression conference for their area. In their call for a conference they said that: "we hope that the Ardoyne conference would pass the same proposals as the Coalisland conference did and then go on to discuss the whole problem of repression in the Ardoyne area".

The proposal to bring the question of repression into the organised working class,

brought results as well. The Coleraine Trades Council passed a motion calling for an ICTU to initiate a trade union inquiry into the allegations of torture and ill-treatment of suspects at the Castlereagh detention centre. The Council gave majority support to the move because recent reports of alleged brutality "seemed to indicate there was a case to be answered" as one delegate put it.

TUCCAR

The West Belfast Branch of the Trade Union Campaign Against Repression has also begun organising. It recently sponsored a meeting of the

Liffey Dockyard Workers in Anderstown. A committee has been set up to organise support for the Dockyard Workers among trade unionists throughout the North. The branch also discussed proposals for intervening in the May Day March in order to urge the trade unions to take up the question of repression.

PROVOS

However, attempts to carry out the call for a 32 County anti-imperialist movement to fight repression, has met with set backs. This is particularly so because of the sectarian attitude of Sinn Fein supporters. The delegate conference to follow up Coalisland took place at only

a few days notice. At the meeting, Sinn Fein and the IRSP attempted to exclude from the committee any groups who who don't agree with the Provisional's military struggle.

This, to say the least, detracted from the aim of the meeting and the Coalisland Conference which was to widen the struggle and not limit it to those who fully support the tactics of the Provos.

There are many workers who want to join in the fight against repression. There are many who could be recruited to the struggle. We need to build a movement that is going to return the struggle to the people -- to the working class who are the only one to gain from a real fight against imperialism.

GOVERNMENT-wrong number

The Department of Post and Telegraphs is seeking to update its poor service by forcing new equipment, conditions and work-practices on the workers, without compensation or consultation. It is attempting to do this through its narrow minded and authoritarian regime, its grievance procedure (which requires individual workers to obey any instruction, "under protest" if necessary) and its instant use of suspension for respecting a picket. The complex but momentous struggle of the IPOEU to resist these measures has raised issues that go beyond the immediate dispute and co-incide with discontent throughout the Post Office. Among these is the discontent of rank and file Post Office workers with their union's bureaucratic and hamstringing leaderships.

The August wave of disputes was "settled" by a sellout formula devised by the Employer - Labour Conference (employers as arbitrators!) One union leader admitted that "we conceded everything". As a result the dispute flared up again but the IPOEU Executive stuck by the settlement and didn't make it official. In November another inadequate deal was fashioned. The Executive accepted proposals worked out between the ICTU and the Minister which again entailed returning to work under the new practices. As in the previous settlement the workers concerned refused to acquiesce to the terms.

From here on in a push from below began in earnest. Headed by left wing members of the Executive and based in Dublin's No. 2 and 4 Branches -- who refused to accept the turnabout -- a more articulate rebellion took shape. A

referendum of these Branches and then the whole of the union produced a vote of no confidence in the Executive's handling of the re-organization claim. An unofficial work to rule began in Dublin. The union leaders, who according to Seamus De Paor, the General Secretary, had been "bending over backwards not to get involved" had now to move and eventually make the dispute official. They were also forced to present a united front with militants at the big, spirited march in Dublin.

The strike was characterized by its rank and file militancy. The anti-sab demonstration in Exchequer St was organised without official permission. IPOEU members at work are paying £5 per week levy and those who are 'out' are receiving £20.

However the most spectacular stirrings for a long time took place elsewhere in the Post Office. Post

men from the Post Office Workers Union met in Athlone on February 26th to discuss wages, conditions and the lack of representation. The unofficial meeting was called by the Dublin Postal Outdoor Branch. The Postmen set up a rank and file working committee representative of all postmen throughout the country.

INTERESTS

This move should not be seen as merely a move by postmen to assert their special interests apart from the sorters and clerks, who are also in the POWU. It is a push from below against an inactive union leadership. The activists postmen demonstrated their wider concerns by urging the union to give moral and financial support to the IPOEU strike.

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

UNFREE CITIZEN

THE PUBLIC MEETING to mark the launching of the new series of *Socialist Republic* held at the beginning of February in Trinity College, was a curious affair. For good reason, the organisers--People's Democracy and Movement for a Socialist Republic--were pleased with it. Nearly 150 crowded the lecture room at one point in the evening. And the bulk of the crowd stayed right to the end of Michael Farrell's speech which wound up the meeting after 11 o'clock.

In front of posters which announced the publication of *Socialist Republic* as 'the Irish revolutionary socialist paper', Brendan Kelly of the MSR gave a spirited defence of the republican and nationalist instincts of the Irish working class. These represented a more adequate recognition of their class interests than did the more 'economist' concerns of social democrats and other (unspecified) socialists, he claimed.

Underlining that view of things, the meeting left completely untouched the bosses' and government offensive on living standards, the Budget (introduced the same week), the National Wage Agreement talks, the closure of major factories, Ferenka and Van Hool, the threat of legislation against unofficial picketing, the firemen's strike in Northern Ireland, and much more. Just what the specifically revolutionary socialist and working class perspective was we did not hear.

They also decided not to transfer from the POWU but to work within the union structure. A wise move -- especially in the public service where the experience of the Post Office Officials Association shows how much energy must go into the fight for recognition alone.

The exciting developments in the POWU provide three aspects of a working model for those who seek to change their own unions. Firstly an organized alternative to the bureaucracy can be built without the futility of leaving the union union -- even a hog-tied public service union. Secondly, the postmen's working committee is in effect acting as an alternative rank-and-file leadership to the Executive. It must be the aim of militants and socialists in the unions, when and where the bureaucracy cannot yet be removed, to build sufficient organization and structures for the rank and file to move without the officials if they remain inert. The postmen's committee provides the

Each of the speakers contributed their own useful insights into the current state of British strategy in Northern Ireland and into the possibility of rebuilding the mass movement of opposition to the British presence and to repression. There was much talk of a 'new conjuncture' as represented by the Coalisland anti-repression conference and the defeat of the Coalition at the polls!

When Brendan Kelly spoke of workers' protests against the introduction of repressive laws he neatly ignored the fact that these had last occurred 18 months ago, and that they were very weak by comparison with similar protests which had occurred in previous years. In doing so, he conveniently ignored the relationship between the inability of workers to fight wage restraint and unemployment and thus develop their confidence and organisation--and the failure to effectively oppose the introduction of repressive laws.

Mike Farrell is right, however, when he states that the groups of the far Left are now in a better position to re-build a revolutionary marxist tradition. We have had few points of reference in the past few decades. Connolly himself provides only a loose framework. The documents of the socialist and communist Left of the 1920s and 1930s have only recently become available again through the insufficiently acknowledged efforts of Jim Lane and the Cork Work-

possibility of doing this.

Thirty, the postmen are claiming control of wage bargaining and thus challenging the restrictions of the National Wage Agreements.

Of course there are many other tasks in the job of making democratic and independent unions.

Officials must be elected. Free collective bargaining must be restored. Regular general meetings must become the norm. For the public service all Government controls over union rules, union officials (who are paid by the Government) and the restrictions on the right to strike must be ended.

ers' Club. But ten years of political activity from the heady days of the Labour Party's leftwards turn and from the eruption on to the streets of the North of years of pent-up frustration among the Catholic minority do provide valuable points of reference. It is in trying to understand the failures that the groups and individuals of the far Left have found some common ground.



Tariq Ali from *Socialist Challenge*.

Bernadette McAliskey is probably much nearer the mark in speaking of the growing maturity of the far Left. All of its organisations--and that includes the Socialist Workers' Movement--have gone through a considerable re-think and most have adopted new practical and theoretical approaches. Within the Socialist Labour Party, which a large proportion of revolutionaries in the South have 'entered' but which only got one single mention at the TCD meeting, and in organisations such as the Trade Union Campaign Against Repression and the Relatives' Action Committees in the North, the members of the different groups are talking to, and working with, each other.

But it is still clear from the meeting which launched the new *Socialist Republic*--and, indeed, from the paper itself, which was

a grave disappointment--that Irish revolutionaries are seriously divided in their definitions of the audience for our political ideas. The groups publishing *Socialist Republic* have, on the evidence of that meeting, restricted their field to those who are in some way concerned with, or involved in, the national question.

Unhappily, Brendan Kelly seemed to demonstrate that the MSR has still not recognised the need for revolutionaries to connect with the aspirations and with the expressions of the broader population of class-conscious workers. His 'new conjuncture', and his demand that we 'concretise the slogans' reflect the rootedness in the language and the structures of small groups.

Tariq Ali described that phenomenon very well: the papers of those groups tended either to show a posturing towards the working class--that is, pretending to have an audience of tens of thousands--a substitution for the working class or an impersonation of the working class. Some groups continued to behave, said Ali, as if they were in Tsarist Russia. His point needs to be taken seriously, not just as a half-humorous gesture of self-criticism.

The features which Tariq described are those of a Left completely uncertain of its relations with the working class, precisely because it has no roots in that class. The message of this *Socialist Republic* meeting was that there are now better chances of building those relations and sinking those roots--through the national struggle--than for many years. But one Coalisland does not make a 'new conjuncture'. And real roots will never be sunk as long as revolutionaries maintain an elitist disdain of dirtying themselves with the "economistic" concerns of the wider working class.



Bernadette McAliskey of the I.S.P.

NEWS— Medicine for the rich

THE ANNOUNCEMENT in August that Belfast is to join the ranks of Harley Street medicine with the construction of a new £1½ million pound private clinic could become the rallying point for a concerted attack on the erosion of health services in the North. Whether or not the campaign fizzles out in a mess of generalities will largely depend on the attitude of those left groups involved in the campaign. What is certain though is that the private clinic is a symbol of all that is going wrong with the National Health Service in the North.

Private medicine is of course the monopoly of the rich and well to do and a cursory examination of those involved in the Belfast Private Clinic confirms this. The Workers Research Unit in Belfast in their latest bulletin have investigated the background to the clinic and show quite clearly the three powerful groups behind the idea. The first of these is of course the medical profession — or at least its higher echelons of consultants.

N.H.S.

In 1976 the British Labour government announced the phasing out of private pay beds in N.H.S. hospitals, largely in response to pressure from the hospital workers unions. Such a move of course threatened the consultants' lucrative income from private medicine but was of benefit to working class patients since the queue for operations, beds and treatment would be considerably reduced. The response of this section of the medical profession has been to enthusiastically back private clinics wherever possible. Thus in Belfast consultants have contributed several thousand pounds to

the clinics. The advantage of tax deductible contributions is added to by the knowledge that they are creating for themselves a further lucrative source of income.

Not all these consultants are in it for the money though; as the Workers' Research Unit points out the ideologue behind the Belfast clinic is one Gavin Boyd, a junior hospital consultant at the Royal Victoria Hospital, who is politically committed to the idea of private medicine. He sees the clinic as an attack against all the "levelling and communistic" tendencies prevalent in social medicine. Boyd's opinion of the hospital workers' unions such as NUPE and COHSE reveal more about his character and his motivations. He is virulently anti-trade union and accuses the trade unions of being responsible for any deterioration in the quality of health services.

The other pressure groups behind the private clinic are of course industry and commerce and the large private health insurance companies such as B.U.P.A.BUPA have been acting in the North for about twenty years now and like the parent company in Britain have undergone a vast expansion in business. Their

commitment to, and interest in, the private clinic comes in the form of a £100,000 interest free loan. Thus the hospital consultants, industry and the insurance companies all stand to benefit from the Belfast private clinic.

It is of course the working class who will suffer from this development. Public expenditure cuts in the Northern health service have come in the form of static budgets and so-called 'rationalisation' of hospitals. Smaller country hospitals are closed down in favour of larger urban ones. The result has been, as in Britain, longer queues for treatment and operations. The defenders of private enterprise in medicine argue that the private clinics reduce the length of queues in the NHS. But nothing could be further from the truth. The Belfast private clinic, like those in Britain, is a small affair and many forms of treatment and operations as well as back up analysis will continue to be conducted in state hospitals like the Royal. Thus queue jumping will continue to go on.

Many working class, but especially anti-unionist, areas in Belfast have virtually no health service provision. Ardoyne and the Markets have no

doctors or clinics at all; the New Lodge area has no doctor; three doctors service 10,000 patients in the Divis and Falls area; while in Andersonstown a brand new clinic has been without a doctor for 18 months even though it originally was built to house 12 doctors. In those areas fortunate enough to have a G.P. he is usually so overworked that receptionists have to dole out prescription forms.

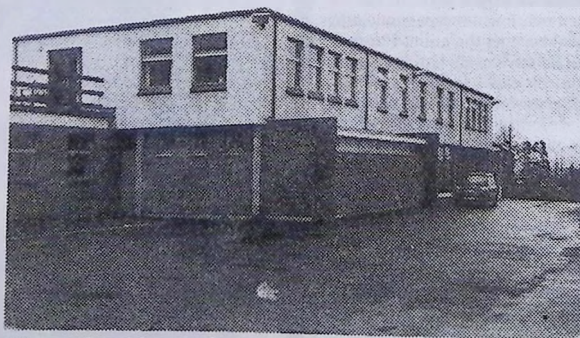
CAMPAIGN

It is time to launch a campaign against the private clinic and against the erosion of the National Health Service. The private clinic symbolises the attack on medicine for all and is leading the return to medical treatment for the rich only. There has been an action committee formed in Belfast to organise a fight against the clinic and a meeting was held in Transport House recently. Incredibly the trade unionists, the left and the doctors refused to take any action against the clinic. Because the committee attempted to attract as many people in medicine to the meeting, the issue of the private clinic was dropped and instead the audience were 'treated' to the lunatic home-spun ideas of Dr. John Robb such as the need for relations to look after patients instead of nurses! People at the meeting actually defended the private clinic because they did not want to alienate Dr. Robb and the other doctors who might be won to a more generalised campaign on the national health service.

ATTACK

A concerted attack by the trade union movement could stop the building of this clinic. The private clinic represents all that is going wrong with the national health service. The working class in the North will suffer if the clinic goes ahead. A campaign against the clinic should be used as a way of exposing the inadequacies of the entire health system.

Not a brick has been laid yet but a sustained campaign by the trade unions, particularly the hospital and building workers' unions could prevent its being built and take the first step towards demanding better health care for all.



18 months without a doctor
Ballyowen clinic in Anderstown

WHO GIVES A DAMN ABOUT THE UNEMPLOYED

IN ONE of the most sickening acts to occur so far in a pretty sickening year, two fulltime, paid officials of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union got up on their hind legs and said that as far as they were concerned there was no unemployment problem. These two gentlemen, a Mr. McDermot and a Mr. McEvoy, said that the unemployed didn't want work, they were getting too much money on the dole.

Instead of being immediately turfed out of the trade union movement onto their well-padded arses the gentlemen continue to exercise influence and power. We can't pretend to be surprised. It is in such little slips that the overall attitude of these people towards unemployment is revealed. And that attitude is one of unconcern. Despite all the militant words that are trotted out on suitable occasions the total sum of action against unemployment has amounted to little more than a couple of marches and the odd seminar over the past four years.

On the following two pages we compile some facts and figures on unemployment and the prospects for jobs in the coming period. They should be used to prick the balloon of smugness and complacency that exists in the trade union movement — the attitude that it will all come right in the end and that you don't actually have to do anything about it.





THE FACTS ON UNEMPLOYMENT

THEY never hit the headlines. And there is never any attempt to build expose type stories around the individuals who make up the figures. But each month, you can find in a tiny little corner tucked away in your paper, the monthly figures for the unemployment rate. For a few years now they have fluctuated backwards and forwards over the 100,000 mark.

For many, unemployment is steady becoming a permanent state. And the longer you are on the dole, the less benefits you receive. It has been estimated that around one half of those who sign on are only receiving Unemployment Assistance. For a single man, that means living on £10.70 a week; for a married man with two children it means surviving on £25.05 a week.

The Fianna Fail election victory owed a lot to the hopes that its manifesto raised for an end to unemployment—particularly youth unemployment. One of its main themes was getting the country back to work. Yet short of proposing to increase foreign borrowing, its spokesmen did not come up with any specific suggestions on how they were going to cut the dole queues.

It was only with the introduction of a white paper in the Dail in January entitled "National Development 1977-80" that we got any glimpse of the details of the Fianna Fail strategy. The White Paper's main promises or proposals—depending which way you look at it—are to:

Create 27,000 net non-agricultural jobs a year.

Increase foreign borrowing.

Reduce the tax burden.

Encourage income restraint.

Introduce a Buy Irish campaign.

Although it rambles on at great length over the whole of the economy, its main concerns are to detail the need for imme-

diates action to raise employment and output and to discuss policy measures designed to sustain any projected growth. We need only look at its proposals for lowering the rate of unemployment to see its hollowness.

Fianna Fail has promised to "reduce unemployment" by 75,000 in the next three years. Even on the present figures, that means leaving a lot of people on the dole. But their figures show that their proposal is really to take 75,000 people off the dole queues.

That is a slightly different thing. For the White Paper states that if they are simply to cover the expected increase in the labour force (school-leavers), the numbers who will be made redundant in the future, and the net outflow from agriculture, they must provide 20,000 jobs a year. So therefore, on the Government figures, the real number of jobs we will need to create is 45,000 a year, or 135,000 over three years if the target of cutting the unemployment rate is to be achieved.

But even these figures are the most optimistic possible. The Bank of Ireland McKinsey study suggests that the figure should be nearer 60,000 jobs a year, if the target is to be reached.

It is also clear that it is manufacturing industry which needs to expand and develop if the job targets are to be reached. One area mapped out for growth by the White Paper is the services sector where an increase of 11,500 jobs is projected each year. But Ireland already has a high level of employment in services for its stage of development, compared with other countries with a similar gross national product per head. It should be possible, then, to service an enlarged manufacturing base with the existing level of investment and employment.

Irish industry has emerged from the 1974-76 recession better placed than most other economies—thanks in no small measure to the fall in sterling and a jump in productivity by Irish workers. It has now a projected growth of 6-7% for 1978. Inflation is supposed to drop under 10% and unemployment fell by 5000 last year. Given this relative strength, what are the chances of Irish industry achieving the targets set by the White Paper? To answer that we must look at the two sectors of Irish industry: the existing Irish manufacturers and the I.D.A. grant-aided foreign industry.

Firstly let's look at existing Irish industry. The Irish Times companies list 1977 shows that 65% of the total increased their earnings per share while only 7% recorded higher losses. These figures are based on the returns to the end of 1976, but interim returns for 1977 show results to be even better. Waterford Glass has raised its profits by 37% to £9.2m. and group employment by 500 (mainly by acquisitions: the Smith Group, C.R.V. in Dundalk). But despite the very bright outlook for 1978 there are fundamental weaknesses in existing Irish industry.

The impact of free trade and the recession in 1974-76 meant that existing Irish industry was suffering job losses and stagnant output. The I.D.A. report "A profile of grant aided industry in Ireland" shows that between 1966 and 1974 employment in existing Irish industry dropped by 8000 while the number of jobs in new industry more than tripled. Existing Irish industry accounted for 22% of manufacturing employment while only contributing 38% of exports. The home market which in 1974 accounted for 65% of total manufacturing output is too small to sustain any real growth in jobs.

The pressures are therefore on existing

Irish industry to "rationalise itself" if it is to become more competitive. That means that the fantastic profits it is accumulating will not be invested in creating jobs. Rather, if they are to be re-invested, it will be in the form of increased capital and machinery—which cut jobs. It is no surprise, then, that in the last few years, there has been a major increase in the applications for grants from the I.D.A. for purchases of new equipment and re-tooling.

Furthermore even if we assume that the Government is successful in achieving a real growth in gross national product of 7% per year there is no reason to believe that the extra spending power will remain in this country. Most likely we will see an increase in imports of consumer goods: with all its implications for the balance of payments—despite the Buy Irish campaign to be launched by Dessie O'Malley. It has not been successful in the past and despite the fact that we now have Johnny Giles on our side there is no reason to believe it will work in the future.

The prospects for existing Irish industry have improved but with only 4 of the top 20 companies exporting over 30% of output and with spare capacity from the recent recession, at its best we can expect no more than 5,000 to 10,000 new jobs in this area.

The real growth and driving force in the economy have been the grant-aided foreign industries. By 1973 they accounted for 29% of employment, 30% of gross output and 62% of exports of manufactured goods. Their importance to the economy has continued to expand and one only needs to remember the Ferenka affair to see how central to the economy they are.

However, the Managing Director of the I.D.A., Mr J. Killeen, let out a very interesting secret in a speech to I.D.A. staff on

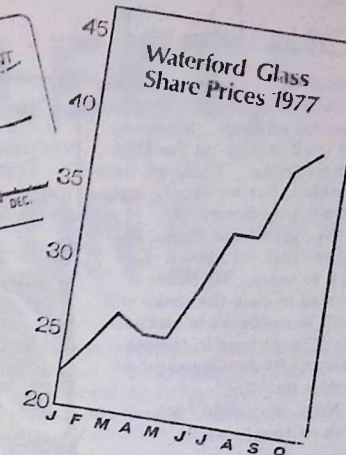
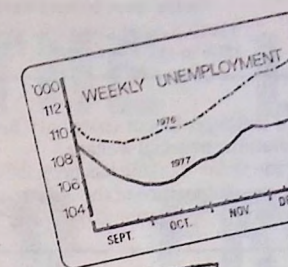
March 1 when he outlined details of the 27,000 jobs target for 1978. What was made clear in this speech was the difference between job approvals and actual jobs created. It is estimated that only between 55% and 60% of jobs approved ever come into existence within five years.

A look at one firm, Courtaulds, who were to build a £25m. factory in Letterkenny that was supposed to employ 1000 people is enough to prove the point. The I.D.A. in 1973 handed the company a £5m. grant, upped the figure of job projections to 1800 and waited for the jobs to roll in. Five years later Courtaulds are employing 166 people and the plant is not yet finished. Officials estimate that it will end up at around the 450 job mark, at an outlay by the I.D.A. of £12,000 per job.

In 1978 the I.D.A. estimated that 12,000 new jobs would come on stream and 13,000 in 1979, a far cry from the 27,000 and 30,000 trumpeted by the Minister. This figure alone proves the fallacy and hollowness of Fianna Fail's strategy.

An interesting feature of the I.D.A. job approvals programme is its cyclical pattern. With the exception of the 1971-72 downturn which can be attributed to the impact of the Northern troubles, the I.D.A.'s success in attracting firms is closely related to the ups and downs of the international economy.

The I.D.A. have made it clear that job expansion depends on "the continuation of a favourable economic climate". But there you have the real nub of the problem. The steady high growth rates that the world economy achieved in the 1950s and 1960s are receding into the dim past. The recovery from the last recession has been very uneven. The OECD secretariat now predicts that there will be a marked slow down in the growth rate of the Western capitalist economies in 1978.



THERE WAS one speech given at the Fianna Fail Ard Fheis which got a fair amount of headlines. It was by our friend on the left here, Twinkle-toes Haughey. Charlie was worried about the fact that some of the nasty unemployed types were fiddling the dole. Another speech, by Jim Murray of the National Social Services Council, didn't get so much space. 86,000 of those on the dole, he said - that's four-fifths - were getting the minimum payments. 16,000 of these were signing on and getting nothing. But who cares if the unemployed figures rise as long as the share prices do too. Right, Charlie?

There are many signs to support such a conclusion. Japan's industrial production rose by only 4.5% last year. IFC finance ministers have admitted that real growth in the community looks like being only 3.3% in 1978. The German economy is expected to grow by only 3.5% in 1978.

The recovery of 1977 has begun to run out of steam. None of the major economies are in a position on their own to provide the growth and expansion that is necessary for world trade to recover. But one of the most significant features at present is the failure of the capitalist class as a whole to go ahead with its capital investment programmes. In the absence of investment, which is the motor of capitalist growth, the Western economy is sluggish and stagnant.

The British business journal, The Economist, summed up the problem in a recent issue when it stated that: "a continuation of the recovery now depends more than ever on corporations overcoming their marked reluctance to go ahead with capital investment programmes. In the two and a half years since the recession trough, capital outlays, when adjusted for inflation, have increased less than half as much as they did average over similar periods in previous expansions since Hitler's war".

Therefore, the short term growth which Ireland is now experiencing cannot last. The very openness of our economy will ensure that. Unemployment will not drop significantly from the 100,000 mark or around 9 to 10% of the working population and will probably increase again. Unemployment, then, must be central to our politics for modern capitalism has shown that it is unable to solve it. ■

PAUL O BRIEN

Stop Press!

HOLD IT... hold everything, stop the front page! Well stop page six anyway. Seems we got it all wrong on the USA miners strike. There we were thinking that we should support workers in struggle.

No, says John Henle, big wig in Ohio art circles. Get back to work. Mr Henle is worried in case the strike will result in cutbacks in electricity. The change in temperature might damage some of his nice paintings.

Now, why didn't we think of that?

Dead duck...

AND now, something for our own little League of Decency himself, J.B. Murray. We are glad to report that The Youth Board of Finland has taken a strong line in protecting the morals of that nation.

Donald Duck is in trouble. See, the Youth Board can find no indication that he ever actually married Daisy Duck, though he's been cavorting with her for many a year. The cad even goes around half naked. So... not suitable reading, says the Board. We definitely agree.

CITIZEN CEASECEU -
WE PRESENT THIS
ORDER OF LENIN FOR
YOUR GREAT SERVICE TO
THE WORKING PE -



POOR OLD Vladimir Ilyich. Mr. Lenin's name is being taken in vain again.

President Ceauseceu, the Rumanian Communist Party leader is to get the order of Lenin on his sixtieth birthday. Seems the comrades in Russia think he's doing a good job.

Ceauseceu is taking the credit for bringing to an end

"WHY does Ireland have the lowest manufacturing costs in the EEC?" That's a good question. It's also the headline on a two-page advert by the IDA in the Economist. The extract below speaks for itself.....

For instance, labour costs have been kept to a keenly competitive level - and so have employer contributions to social welfare.

Trade union thinking has been influenced constructively. Irish unions realise they must compete as an essential feature of the industrial environment. As a result, Ireland has been able to negotiate and adhere to her National Wage Agreements.



Bless you, Jimmy

WHEN THE US Government decide they want to kill you they don't take any half measures. They're spending 120 billion dollars this year on the military. That's 23 cents out of every dollar in the budget.

That provides enough hardware to kill everyone in the world 35 times over. And that's from the famous christian, Jimmy Carter. Now, if he was an atheist we'd really be in trouble...

Murph's Angels

WITH ADVERTISING rates being what they are, we can understand the reluctance of Kevin O'Driscoll, owner of Murph's restaurant, to make a big splash when he wants staff. Just a discreet little paragraph about "angels and graciousness" and all that.

Well, let's do him a favour. The following "staff wanted" advert comes free of charge, compliments of SWR.



"You too can get 75p an hour at Murph's. Hang around for six months and we'll see you right with a whopping 95p an hour.

We recently stopped the practice of docking workers for lates at treble time - i.e. 5 minutes late. 15 minutes pay docked. So, you see we're spoiling you.

You'll notice that the menu says "10% service charge", but don't bother your pretty little angel head. We'll take care of all that - you won't even see it.

You may get a bit footsore trotting around the place but we thought of that too. We sack people regularly - on the spot. We're thoughtful enough to know that you might like a change of scene but, being an angel, you'd be too shy to tell us. That way we also keep a high turnover of staff so that you won't be bothered with unions or the like. I mean, angel, just look what happened to Ferenka!

One drawback is that you won't get much chance to see the divine features of Mr. O'Driscoll. Kevin is a model - you might catch a glimpse of him in the adverts for Power's Whiskey if you're lucky. And he's so busy with modeling and with taking care of the estimated £1,000 a day we take in at the eatery on Batchelors Walk."

The sad truth is that the management of this sweatshop could justifiably claim that it's not as bad as some of the other dressed-up flea-pits in town.

UNITY OF THE LEFT, THE UNITED FRONT

THE UNITY, or rather lack of unity, of the Left has always been seen as a major weakness. Many socialists contrast their own divisiveness to the seemingly monolithic unity of the ruling class. Others have seen in the divisions and splits, the traces of a conspiratorial plot where wreckers and 'agents' assume leading roles. Official Sinn Fein, for example, described their split with the IRSP in precisely these terms.

However the division of the Left into different parties and groups has much deeper roots than that. Disagreements exist not only on the tactics and methods of struggle to be adopted, but even on the eventual goals and understanding of the type of socialism to be fought for. Official Sinn Fein have explicitly stated that its goal for the foreseeable future is a "state capitalist society". Others from the revolutionary left, have made it clear that their concept of socialism is one which smashes the existing state in order to build a society founded on workers control of industry and an extension of democratic participation to every area of life.

The Socialist Labour Party is clearly the exception. Its formation was the product of the coming together of those with different traditions on the Left - those who came from the Labour Party background and those who emerged from the smaller revolutionary groups. It, therefore, needs to foster open discussion and debate within its ranks before it moves in a decisive direction with real political perspectives which guides its work.

SECTARIANISM

Yet it is nevertheless true that the sectarianism and the divisiveness of the Left are often enough to repel even its own supporters. Conversely, the coming together of groups and parties in joint initiatives can raise the confidence and morale of workers immeasurably. And it is no wonder. The whole basis of a working class experience under capitalism, is one of a collective and unified struggle on the factory floor against the bosses - no matter what the party affiliation of individuals are. Where defeats do occur, they often result from the failure to overcome the divisions that capitalism fosters.

If it achieved little else, the Left Alternative showed the potential appeal which a united Left can have. A significant number of trade union militants and activists related to it at some level. But the Left Alternative failed to build on that base and fill the vacuum in Irish politics. It disintegrated as both the Communist Party and Official Sinn Fein attempted to maintain a tight sectarian control over the initiative, to the extent of excluding other left groups.

Was such a disintegration inevitable? In the long term it probably was - but the remarkable feature about the Left Alternative was its failure to launch the smallest of initiatives, given the support it had. A large measure of the reason for that stemmed from its politics. Its basic perspective was that of placing demands on the government to increase the extent of planning in the economy - mainly through expanding the state sector and enlarging its control over the private sector. It therefore assumed that the state was somehow neutral and that it could be pressurised into acting

against the very interests which it represents - the bosses of the private sector. It assumed that real planning could exist in a society dominated by competition. In fact much of the motivation behind its demands, was that of making the Irish economy more competitive and efficient internationally in the hope that this would lead to an increase in employment.

Such goals and perspectives were inevitably reflected in its proposed methods of struggle. Given that it expected only the state to act, it provided no immediate guidelines for workers in struggle. Even for those who fully supported its programme, it did not propose any means for mobilising to achieve it - short of its implicit goal of winning support for its candidates at election time. Its perspective of pressurising the state - in an orderly and respectable manner meant that it did not seek to raise the level of independent working class action and confidence.

LEFT ALTERNATIVE

As a result the Left Alternative was simply a bloc for propaganda - rather than an agitational body. Its sole achievements lay in publishing a number of pamphlets which argued its case. Precisely because it was mainly interested in producing general propaganda on the importance of the state sector, the unity of the leaderships of the respective organisations was sufficient. Because it did not mobilise even its own supporters, it was easier for the Communist Party and Official Sinn Fein leadership to succeed in manipulating it in a sectarian manner.

Upon the formation of the SLP both the CP and the SFWP have made new overtures for a revival of something like the Left Alternative. The CP have made it clear that they seek a broader front - one which can pose as a 'National Alternative'. Such a proposal is only understandable in the context of the CP's stages theory - at this stage we need to work with 'progressive allies' such as the small time native capitalists in an alliance against the multi-nationals. The President of SFWP, Tomas Mac Giolla, also spoke on the unity of the left theme at their recent Ard Fheis - but he did not specify on what basis it could be achieved.

The Socialist Labour Party will, therefore, need to discuss and clarify its own position on the need for unity of the Left. Amongst whole groups of activists and militants, there is a burning desire for unity. More specifically, it must make it clear to a number of excellent militants who, for whatever reason, have decided to stay in the Labour Party that it is continually prepared to engage in united action with them and their party. The question really is how do we translate that desire for unity into specific initiatives which can raise the confidence and combativity of substantial sections of the working class.

INTERNATIONAL

To answer that we must return to a much earlier tradition that is rarely discussed in Ireland - the tradition of the early Communist International. By 1921 it was clear to most members of the fledgling Communist Parties that the revolutionary upsurge that succeeded the October Revolution in 1919, had receded. Some looked to the 'theory of the offensive' - whereby the party should act as a catalyst by

engaging in adventurist activities in order to arouse the masses—as a means out of the cul de sac. Others looked to the tactic of the United Front as the principal means of relating to workers who remained loyal to reformist leaders. It is the latter tradition that we can most profitably learn from.

Essentially the proposal for a united front with reformist organisations implies breaking with an older social democratic concept of unity. Social democrats traditionally view their role as a party in educative terms. The image is one of an apathetic working class which needs to be continually 'educated' through propaganda by the party before it can take constructive action. By contrast the notion of the united front implies that propaganda alone—or the simple spreading of your ideas—is never sufficient to win over the majority of the class. Workers come to socialism through their own experience in taking part in the class struggle. By engaging in that struggle ideas can be opened up and traditional notions shattered as they do not correspond to reality.



Matt Merrigan of Liaison of the Left -- now in the S.L.P.

The united front, then, of parties of the left must grow out of the needs of the class struggle. It cannot simply be a bloc for propaganda which has no immediate connection with that struggle. That implies that unity of the Left must be built around specific and even partial demands that can help raise the level of class struggle. They are also the type of demands that workers who still support reformist organisations can relate to. Our aim must be to draw such workers into struggle by making concrete proposals for action over immediate issues.

In the present context that means that we are not just for unity against unemployment but for unity around specific proposals which can initiate action against unemployment—for, among others, a campaign for a 35 hour week; for a campaign



Tomas Mac Giolla Sinn Féin The Workers Party

to end systematic overtime and productivity deals. We are not just for vague unity against repression but for a united campaign to abolish the Special Criminal Courts and the Diplock courts; to fight for political status and to take up specific cases around which a mobilisation can be built. We are not just for unity against wage restraint but for a real campaign in the unions against the National Wage Agreements and for the launching of wage claims now which can break that Agreement.

Of course it is our belief, as revolutionaries, that reformist leaders, no matter what their party affiliation, will not fight consistently for such specific demands. Their ties to the state, their tradition of negotiating and compromising rather than mobilising, their overall political perspectives—all will tend to restrict their ability to wage a consistent struggle even for demands for what they claim to adhere to. Nevertheless workers who place some trust in such leaders may not see this—except through the force of experience. Propaganda in itself is never enough.

UNITED FRONT

However, we must also be clear that the aim of the united front is not simply to 'expose' reformist leaders. Rather it is a genuine attempt to link up all those parties and militants who are prepared to fight for specific issues. And there is no doubt that unity in fighting repression, unemployment and wage restraint is desperately needed now.

Further, in seeking unity of the Left, it must be clear that we are not trying to stifle discussion about the political differences that divide us. The tactic of the united front implies maintaining the right and freedom to offer criticism of one's partners—particularly when they fail to consistently fight for the agreed demands.

It is on the basis of such a proposal for unity that the SLP should approach Labour Party members and members of other organisations. We must make it clear to those who have stayed in the Labour Party that we do not intend to behave in a sectarian manner towards them or simply indulge in personality bashing. Our aim must be continually to draw them into a type of political activity that entails direct action and thus show them concretely that there is an alternative to simply passing resolutions in Labour Party branches. If the Labour Party leadership issues statements at any stage indicating their opposition to repression or their support for any initiatives against unemployment, we should be prepared to take them up, and propose specific activities.

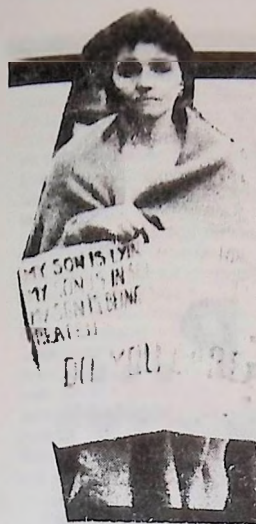
Nevertheless, while continually open to unity in action, the SLP must also make it clear that it is intent on building an independent revolutionary party. Our sole or even main orientation must not be to the Labour Party. Many stay in the Labour Party, not because they have illusions in the leadership's sincerity but precisely because they believe that it is extremely unlikely that a revolutionary party can be built. It is not as if the Labour leadership need to be exposed—four years in Coalition have provided as much exposure as is needed. It is only when the tempo and combativity of the class struggle increases and when the SLP succeeds in building itself that the final ties to the Labour Party can be broken for many who now remain in it.

KIERAN ALLEN

LETTERS...

We would welcome any comments articles or reviews from our readers

Send to: SWR 24 TALBOT STREET
DUBLIN 1



ON THE BLANKETS

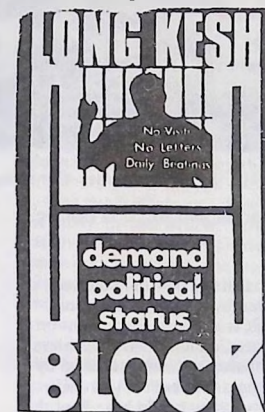
It is now two years since political status has been removed in Northern Ireland. 300 men are now "on the blanket" in H Block -- they are refusing to wear prison clothes. Hundreds more on remand in the Crumlin Road expect to join the blanket protest. These prisoners and the women in Armagh Jail have now become the focus of demonstrations throughout the North.

MARTIN McKENNA spent ten months on the blanket. After his release from H Block, he told Socialist Worker Review what it was like for the men on the blanket protest. "The worst part was being locked up in a cell for 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It was cold, particularly standing on the concrete floor in your bare feet. The cell was seven feet long with just two heating pipes, which were often turned off. The food was rubbish—cold and inadequate. For breakfast you got tea, a bit of bread and corn flakes. You could count the corn flakes. We used to yell across to one another how many corn flakes we got."

NO COMMUNICATION

McKenna explained that the only way the prisoners, isolated in single cells made of 9" concrete walls with thick steel doors, could talk with each other was to yell at the top of their voices. "You would go hoarse after two days, then you kept quiet until you got your voice back." But to occupy the time, the prisoners would organise quizzes, debates, and recently Irish language classes in this manner. Prisoners on the blanket are allowed no reading material, receive no visits and are allowed only one letter a month. The only other communication they have is on Sunday. Most of

them put on trousers to go to mass so they can talk with the others for five minutes on the way to and from mass. "We were searched before and after mass and the screws are present for the entire service." Some men have refused to put on the prison trousers for even this length of time.



As well as having to live in these degrading conditions, McKenna told of the punishments and harassments the prisoners have to endure at the hands of the screws. "We were punished every fortnight for not putting on prison clothes. We lost remission and all the privileges we didn't have anyway. They take the mattress out of the cell for three days. Many of the prisoners are feeling the effect of the bright lights in the cells and the lack of daylight. The screws can regulate the lights from outside the cell and if they see you are squinting or are bothered by the light, they turn it on brighter. Sometimes they

turn it off in the middle of the day to disorient you." For such an excuse as talking back to a screw, they can be sent to a punishment cell. "This is absolutely sound-proof and there is no mattress so you have to sleep on a concrete platform. One prisoner from the Short Strand spent 14 days there. Another spent thirty days."

The health of many of the prisoners is deteriorating. Many have problems with their legs because of the cold floors. One prisoner had to come off the blanket because there was a chance he would become crippled. Several are developing kidney trouble. In the past few months they have been doubling men up into the cells in H Block. Two men sharing the same small space every minute of the day has proved to be psychologically demoralising. But the prison authorities are forcing this.

Martin McKenna is one of the more fortunate protesters. He won an appeal and was released. He spent 9½ months in H Block's torture cells and 8½ months on remand when he should not have spent one day in jail. At the appeal the judge said: "This case should never have come to trial." There was insufficient evidence, but McKenna had received concurrent sentences of 14 years and ten years. At his trial the only evidence produced was his fingerprints on documents, which were not even incriminating documents. This is not unusual. Almost any case

brought to the Diplock courts will bring in a guilty verdict. That's one of the tactics used by Mason and the British government to keep their rate of convictions up so they can continue to claim that they are defeating the Provisional IRA.

Once sentenced, McKenna joined the other men in H Block on the blanket protest. "I went on the blanket because I was convicted as a political offender and should have got political status. I was convicted by the Diplock courts, which are special political courts. There was no difference between me and someone at the top end of the camp" (the rest of Long Kesh).

POLITICAL PRISONERS

Many who hear of the horrors of H Block wonder how the men can keep up their protest. McKenna said: "The men believe that political status will be restored because of their protest inside and through the military and political struggle outside. The men say: 'I'm a political prisoner. I would never put on a monkey suit.' The British government has denied political status in order to break the Republican movement. They know that while the prisoners had their own cages, they could show they are still an army. Now the government is using H Block to try to take away political status from those who already have it. Recently several men were charged with assaulting screws and were sent to the cells in H Block before ending their term in the regular Long Kesh cage. The screws are provoking the prisoners, hoping to get more sent down to H Block." The government wants to empty the cages in the Kesh, and have the cells in H Block overflowing with prisoners.

"In denying political status the government is saying they're not political prisoners, they're just criminals. But the men in H Block are republicans, fighting for their freedom. It's a fight that's been going on for 800 years. The republican movement has always been there. The one and only reason for the fight is to get the Brits out and to let the Irish run their own affairs. There won't be any solution until the Brits get out."

WHEN CONNOLLY JOINED THE SLP...



National Executive, Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party, 1914. Standing: James Connolly, William O'Brien, M. J. Egan, Thomas Cassidy, W. E. Hill
Sitting: Thomas MacPartlin, D. R. Campbell, P. T. Daly, James Larkin and M. J. O'Lehane.

THERE IS nothing new under the sun—not even, or especially not, the name, Socialist Labour Party. Indeed, each of the three names proposed for the party which came out of the Independent Labour general election campaign in Dublin last June has been used before. Each has its own historical echoes. And each was the name of a party with which James Connolly was centrally associated. Indeed, Connolly was a member of more political parties in his lifetime than some people have had hot dinners.

The Socialist Labour Party has had two important previous manifestations in the English-speaking world. In the United States, the SLP was the most significant left-wing organisation for 20 years. In Britain the SLP played a crucial role during the most revolutionary period of the British working class's history. It was active until the formation of the Communist Party, in which former SLP leaders were to become central figures. For a brief period after 1904, some former members of the Irish Socialist Repub-

lican Party, which Connolly had founded in Dublin, constituted themselves as an Irish section of the British SLP.

Before World War I and the Russian Revolution divided the international socialist movement into reformist and revolutionary camps, left-wing parties often spanned a wide range of political viewpoints. Also, because the conception of a socialist party in the period before the successes of Lenin and the Bolsheviks gave a relatively low priority to active leadership, to organised intervention in the struggles of the working class, the two SLPs, and their contemporaries, contained considerable differences within them.

They have, however, bequeathed one central idea to the socialist tradition, that is, the 'strategy' of industrial unionism as a means to achieve socialism. It is laid out most accessibly in Connolly's *Socialism Made Easy*, for many years a sort of SLP manual. While few would argue its relevance to the problems we face today, its historical value was that it focussed the attentions of

socialists of that time on the potential of the trade unions.

It is a common comment on James Connolly that his achievements are seriously qualified by his failure to build a political party which would have kept the revolutionary content of his work and his writings alive. That is really to say that James Connolly was not Vladimir Lenin, for it was Lenin and the Bolsheviks who hammered out, in practice, and in the particular conditions of Russia, a model of the political party which might have done the necessary for Connolly. In so far as Connolly had a developed view of what a political party should be, it was shaped by his years in the Socialist Labour Party.

Founder and father of the American SLP, from which the British version drew its inspiration, was the strange sectarian, Daniel De Leon. The party rose and fell with him, and although James Connolly clearly had the theoretical better of him, and drew the support of the best activists from him, in an epic argument stretched over several years,

it was Connolly who had to resign, not De Leon.

The Connolly-De Leon controversy, the main contributions to which were published by the Cork Workers' Club last year under that title, concerned attitudes to demands for higher wages, to the institution of monogamous (one-to-one) marriage, and to the church and religion. It was carried on—often in the sharpest tones, but always with the utmost seriousness, even pedantry—within the American SLP from 1904. Connolly, of whom it is too often forgotten that he spent only a fraction of his active life in Ireland, had gone to the USA in 1903.

He had known of the SLP before that, however, and had advocated its principal ideas in Britain and Ireland. The American party, for its part, had published Connolly's *Erin's Hope* in the USA.

Soon after his arrival in the States, however, Connolly became aware that some of the ideas to which the party's organisers held dogmatically were a hindrance to effective practical work and an unnecessary bar between the

party and potential supporters. What he criticised was very much the stamp which De Leon had put on the party many years before: Engels had already noted the 'arrogance' of the American SLP in the 1890s.

De Leon was a man for absolute principles even on things which could well have been left more open, or where the supposed principles stood between him and the vast majority of those who considered themselves to be no less socialist. While this always kept the SLP on the side of the revolutionaries who made no compromise with the capitalist system, it was also tactically disarming and produced some grotesque theoretical and practical results.

Connolly saw the damage being done by party organisers: they told their audiences that a rise in wages was always destroyed by a rise in prices, they took from the German socialist August Bebel an outright rejection of the individual marriage, and they claimed that socialism and religion were quite incompatible. These arguments were also propagated in the party paper, and it was there that Connolly took up the battle. He considered it no business of socialists to refute clerics and religious people theologically and philosophically; it was where their ideas explicitly obscured the economic and social nature of capitalism that they had to be debated. On marriage, Connolly firmly advocated the traditional relationship of man and wife and the goodness of the family. He could be ambiguous, at least, on matters of religion and morality, but he was surely right to insist that adherence to certain detailed, developed ideas on them should not be an essential condition for belonging to the party.

WAGES

The problem about wages is much more complicated. De Leon's 'iron law' about the value of wage rises being eaten up was a good part of the basis for advocating 'dual unionism', that is, setting up parallel, uncorrupted, fully revolutionary trade unions beside the bodies which had emerged from the craftsmen's guilds and which mixed welfare functions with those of class struggle. While Connolly criticised the wages theory, he went along with the dual unionism. The SLP's strategy, which was expressed through the Socialist Trades and Labour Alliance, operating alongside the American Federation of Labour, was to be a decisive influence in the formation and early years of the Industrial Workers of the World, or Wobblies; and Connolly was later to become one of their organisers.

The arguments and counter-arguments between Connolly and De Leon, and, to a lesser extent, their supporters on either side,



were stretched over several years of the party publication, *The Weekly People*. They were hammered out in public meetings and party conferences. The classical texts, the undisputed authorities, were quoted at length by either side. But there were lulls, and the life of the party was not completely interrupted. Connolly was still invited to lecture on behalf of the party. Though he failed to get a job as a Connecticut organiser, his status in the party grew over the years up to 1907.

The differences within the SLP which led to Connolly's eventual resignation were not those which had dominated the public arguments. Connolly had been putting much effort into drawing the many distinct national groups within the heterogeneous American working class into the mainstream of socialism. The SLP had long been almost exclusively Anglo-Saxon. Connolly achieved some success with the Italians, who formed their own Italian Socialist Federation. And, of course, he played a decisive role in the formation, in 1907, of the Irish Socialist Federation.

De Leon's followers were quickly into print attacking what

were called the race federations. About the same time, an organisational wrangle came to the surface in the party executive, of which James Connolly was a member. It concerned the executive's control of the party paper. A row about two words of a motion which Connolly supported in the executive blew up and led to his resignation.

As one might expect from what has been said of De Leon's political style, he tended to take criticism rather personally. Even with Connolly out of the party, he had not finished with him. He detected in some of Connolly's actions as an organiser for the Wobblies an attempt to undermine the influence within the IWW of the Socialist Labour Party. In these later attacks on Connolly, De Leon claimed he was a wrecking and an agent of the Jesuits! Connolly survived the attacks, and the SLP survived the worst of De Leon's diatribes: to maintain its record as a party committed to class struggle, attracting the best of America's radicals, through its commitment to 'clear cut' principles.

The label 'clear cuts' had been applied in Britain to those in

the Social Democratic Federation (for over 10 years the principal left-wing organisation) who stood out against the SDF's compromises with the reformism of the emerging Independent Labour Party and the Parliamentary Committee of the TUC in the early years of the century.

CLEAR CUT

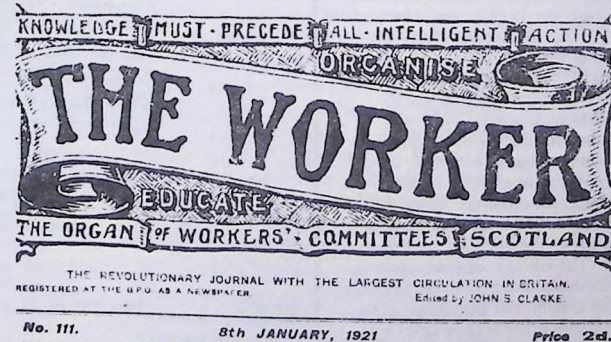
James Connolly led the Scottish-based 'clear cut' faction in the months before he left for the States; out of it came the Socialist Labour Party ('a De Leon party', as contemporaries saw it), with Connolly as chairman, and, very briefly, as National Organiser. They started publishing a paper with the suitably 'clear cut' title of *The Socialist*, a paper and a title which survived for nearly 20 years. Connolly's Dublin supporters, then the ramp of the Irish Socialist Republican Party, contributed to it. (Those who are sceptical about the value of the small left-wing groups of the recent past and present time in Ireland, might reflect on the time and effort which many early socialists whose contributions are not questioned spent in organisations which were no bigger.)

DEPARTURE

The British SLP grew slowly in numbers following Connolly's departure, and it continued to have a disproportionate weight in Scotland. As with its American model, conditions for membership were high: recruits were supposed to be well versed in the theoretical arguments; any of them might be called upon to take the soapbox; all were expected to train in public speaking.

But the party's influence grew rapidly. As J. J. Murphy, an outstanding leader of the war-time and immediate post-war shop stewards' movement, put it: 'The SLP began a new current of thought... which has had a profound influence on all sections of the revolutionary movement and organisations.' That influence was the theory of industrial unionism, expounded in Connolly's *Socialism Made Easy*. As Murphy analysed it critically, he was writing in 1934 as a member of the Communist Party. It reduced the part played by the political party to that of a propaganda society instead of raising it to the forefront as the leader of the political struggle. When the SLP tried to transfer American experience as a package, by setting up the Industrial Workers of Great Britain, it failed, but the party still had a decisive influence.

The internal difference which led to a decline in membership just before World War I concerned the party's attitude to electoral politics and legislative reforms. In 1907, there had been about



'The Worker', the revolutionary journal with the largest circulation in Britain, which was edited by Clarke.

300 members in a total of 20 branches, 7 in Scotland, 13 in England. The number of branches grew to about 30 in 1911-12, but then shrank to 15 at the outbreak of the war. It was during the war, and in the period of revolutionary activity on the shop floor that the party's influence grew again.

In spite of the undeveloped view of the capitalist state in SLP theory, the party stood the crucial test of the outbreak of war far better than most. While the reformist organisations got sucked into the maelstrom of chauvinism and jingoism, the SLP opposed the war outright—and not just from a pacifist position. The party saw it as an imperialist war in which the only interest of workers on either side could be to use their own rulers' displeasure to strengthen their own position. The Socialist was dedicated to that subversive aim: in spite of the close attentions of the police, with frequent raids on the offices and printing works, monthly publication was maintained throughout the war, and the circulation went up from 3000 to 20,000. Well known workers' leaders such as Tom Bell and Arthur McManus were among those on the editorial board.

RED CLYDE

In the greater intensity of war-time production the shop stewards' movement emerged in the British engineering industry. Anti-war socialists, particularly those of the SLP, played leading roles in that movement and in the historic disputes of that period, notably those on the 'Red Clyde'. The Clyde Workers' Committee printed their paper, *The Worker* (not the first or last publication of that name) on the SLP press, they elected SLP members as their leaders and later sent them as delegates to the Communist International in Russia.

Willie Gallacher, who was later to become a Communist MP, was involved at all of those levels; he was one of three to be imprisoned for the publication of supposedly insurrectionary material in the paper. In fact *The Worker* had answered the question, Should The Workers Arm?, with an implicit No. 'An organisation that would include all the workers, skilled and unskilled, throughout the entire Clyde area would prove irresistible'—and, it was understood, not need to use physical force.

The SLP's influence was indirect rather than overt. It hardly thought about its leadership role. Indeed, the political parties had such a low profile in the movement that the shop stewards' committees did not feel obliged to define their attitude towards them. The parties did help to orchestrate the positive response to the Russian Revolution of 1917, but none pushed to the fore

in propagating the political lessons of the Bolsheviks' achievements until some years later.

When the Communist International which developed around the successful Bolshevik Party, and specifically around Lenin as leader of the International, turned their attentions to the prospects for working class power in Britain, the SLP disagreed with its analysis. Members of the SLP had been to Russia as delegates of workers' committees, and there was no doubting the party's sympathy with the Russian revolutionaries.

LABOUR PARTY

They believed, however, that the advice to British revolutionaries that they affiliate to the Labour Party was quite misplaced, and based on a gross over-estimation of the Labour Party's influence. Further, the SLP opposed the project of building a Communist Party around the rival British Socialist Party which, while it had possibly been more forward in welcoming the Russian revolution, had, as the SLP saw it, dangerously reformist tendencies. In a recent book on *The Origins of British Bolshevism*, socialist historian, Ray Challinor, concludes that the SLP was right. However, the question of affiliation to the Labour Party remained a live topic for several years after the decision to form a British Communist Party had been put into effect.

After World War I, the National Workers' Committees revived *The Worker*, which had been out of circulation since the war-time ban. The editor appointed, a strange and diverse talent called John S. Clarke, had been the editor of the SLP's *The Socialist*. (Clarke is the subject of a recent small biography, also by Ray Challinor.)

INFLUENCE

The party's influence in the shop stewards' publication was obvious—negatively as well as positively. Arthur McManus wrote about the 1918 general election without advocating which way votes should be cast—and he was an SLP candidate himself in Halifax! Later, the paper and the party grew apart; Clarke was becoming critical of all parties as merely debating societies, and, implicitly at least, he included the SLP in his criticism. There was certainly merit in his implied criticism of the SLP.

The Irish experience also demonstrates clearly that the advice of the Communist International to those in different countries who supported its general aims could be, at least, unhelpful. However, the SLP which continued in existence after the formation of the



The Hand That Will Rule the World—One Big Union.

Communist Party of Great Britain was losing all its best people; some tried briefly to form a more purely revolutionary communist party in Scotland. Most, however, eventually threw in their lot with the CPGB, a party which quickly declined in influence within a couple of years of its foundation. The SLP gradually disappeared.

In the United States, a shadow of the former SLP survived for many years. It would not be at all surprising if, in the curious world of American left sects, it still exists in some form. (The *Wobblies* have maintained a publication and a skeletal organisation.) Again, it took the formation of

an American Communist Party to provide a firmly based alternative.

Connolly had not been able to defeat De Leon theoretically; reacting against the exclusivism of the SLP, he was drawn into the broader Socialist Party of America which accommodated many who were quite definitely not revolutionaries, or Marxists. Like many others before and since, he reacted to a bad experience with one particular party by becoming sceptical about the role of any party. The irony was that the non-party strategy of industrial unionism which provided him with an alternative was also drawn from the Socialist Labour Party!

BRIAN TRENCH

WORKERS RESEARCH UNIT (BELFAST) BULLETIN No. 3 SPRING '78

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Ferenka -- Ferenka workers tell the real story
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COLERAINE workers organise

COLERAINE SHARES with many towns in Northern Ireland the position of being a largely Loyalist town set in a rural conservative environment. Despite this there is a labour tradition in the area. During the 1940s and the 1950s, Coleraine had the honour of having one of the very few communist councillors in Ireland. As one worker said of this alderman, James Murphy, who learnt his politics on the Red Clyde, "He was so far to the left, that people thought he was a communist."

Murphy was a communist but like many from his tradition and generation, he could not politically put over views that were regarded as too far to the left. Though many knew him to be, he never openly declared himself a communist. He came up against many obstacles. Though he fought hard on working class issues, he was often isolated.

Establishment

He could never step too far out of line or the forces of the Establishment and their working class allies would crush him. Yet there was always support for him. Bodies of workers, like a large number of railway men working in the area, were solidly labour.

The 1950s, with Jimmy Murphy campaigning in the foreground, was a time of the unemployed fighting back in Coleraine. The unemployed campaign involved quite a large movement — though it was directed towards MPs and influential bodies who were approached in pleading the plight of the unemployed and demanding new industry.

With the years of war in the North, the 1970s have undoubtedly pulled Coleraine people in new directions. In a council by-election in 1971 there was a test of the local Labour party at the polls. A prominent local trade unionist, Sadie Nevin, would have been returned unopposed but the Unionists could not stand by and see a representative of Labour get on the Borough Council. The Unionist polled about 1000 while Sadie Nevin polled 750. At a time when the Loyalist right was in the ascendancy, this was quite an achievement.

The 1970s have also seen the development of one of the "best factory unions in Ireland" in a large Coleraine factory—Pickering's (dairy products). A branch of the ATGWU has been built which has the management on the run. During the dairy workers strike in December 1974, Pickering's was almost 100% solid. At a time when pickets were being shot at in Belfast, angry farmers beat up strikers at the factory gates while sneering RUC men stood by. (Could it be a coincidence that one picket who threw himself in

front of a tanker being driven out by a strike breaking farmer, went to prison a month later, charged with a serious offence?)

There was little degree of success in that strike but throughout the 1970s the workers showed their militancy. However there is the old story of how one socialist working in the factory has to keep leftist politics under the belt in working with those with a largely loyalist tradition.

Something which hopefully will show itself to be a positive advance for the labour movement is the resurrection of a Coleraine and District Trades Council last year. The trades council grew out of the efforts of a few local trade unionists and socialists who had participated in the Irish Congress of Trade Unions "Better Life for all Campaign". In most fields, this campaign has been seen to be a non-starter but it did bring about the Coleraine Trades Council.

A steering committee was set up and all the unions in the area were approached.



with a good response. In early 1977 a council of 66 delegates was set up, with by far the strongest union represented being the ATGWU. However, so far there has been a poor turnout for meetings and the council would not appear to be representative of all the union members in the area. Speaking for the 11/4 branch of the ATGWU which mainly represents local government workers, there is a lack of union democracy. There are no branch meetings, no co-ordination among members and only patchy work with the union's district officer — though there is a very different story at Pickering's.

The Trades Council faced a real crisis during the Loyalist stoppage last May. At a poorly attended May Day rally in the university, ways of opposing it were discussed. Because of the weakness of the Trades Council and the degree of Loyalist mobilization, little could be done. It must be remembered that Coleraine was one of the towns where support for the stoppage and intimidation and

sabotage were most successful.

In the latter part of 1977 and so far this year, the desperate unemployment situation has again come to the fore in the concerns of the Labour movement. A development which undoubtedly spurred the Trades Council on was the setting up of a number of socialists of the Coleraine Unemployment Action Group which in the beginning, at least, gathered concerned union activists around it. However the fact that it never gathered steam would show how far working class consciousness has to evolve; for in the 1940s with the N. Ireland unemployed figure being 40,000 there was a large unemployed movement in the area. Today there are about 70,000 out of work in the North.

Unemployed

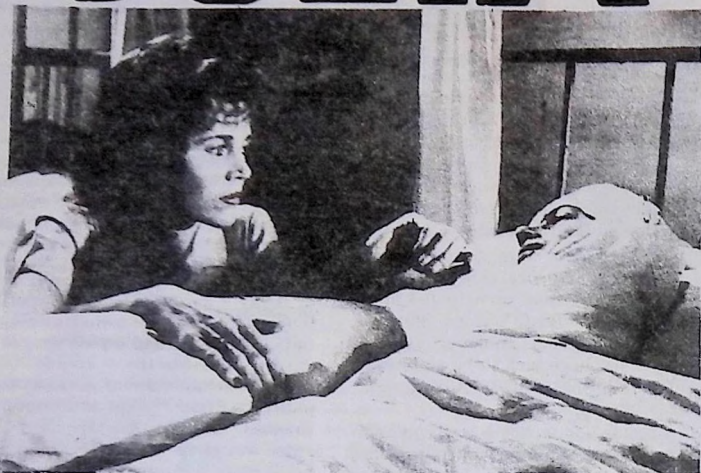
The Unemployment Action Group secretary, Brian Phillips addressed the Trades Council in December and a guarantee was given that there would be a build up of a campaign for jobs. At the Annual General Meeting in January a trade union campaign for jobs was officially launched. Unfortunately it immediately set off in the wrong direction. It has enlisted the support of the Unionist dominated Borough Council in approaching industry and government to bring jobs to the area which now has an unemployment rate of 15%.

Instead of organising the working class in a militant show of strength over such an issue as unemployment (which would take a lot of work in the class) the Trades Council is content in working with petty bourgeois councillors who have hardly the interests of the unemployed at heart — or the "Spongers on the dole" as they are affectionately known in those circles. In taking that direction, the Trades Council may be inadvertently strengthening the hold of such Loyalist councillors over the working class in the area.

However, also at its A.G.M., Coleraine trade unionists gave a lead to all workers in the North: By a majority vote the Trades Council voted to call on the ICTU to undertake an inquiry into RUC torture in Castlereagh. This motion was put before the meeting on the basis that there was a need for the trade union movement to take a stand on repression.

Undoubtedly, the Trades Council has a long way to go before the working class sees it as its own organisation and seizes it in order to democratise and strengthen it. The left groups in the area are organised amongst the local people and students but they are very small in numbers. But one thing we can be sure of: when the revolutionary left makes a breakthrough to the Protestant working class, there will be fertile ground for development amongst Coleraine workers.

JULIA



JULIA IS a special film. It portrays women as real people who are capable of having a close relationship based on mutual trust and respect.

Based on a chapter of Lillian Hellman's memoirs, *Pentimento*, the film stars Jane Fonda as Lillian and Vanessa Redgrave as Julia. Both actresses give stunning performances.

The two characters are developed through flashbacks of the times they spent together prior to the 1930's.

We see Julia as a wealthy child who becomes politicised early in life. Even as a child of 12 or 13 she sees the unfairness in the lives of servants, slaves and poor working people.

Julia, with her encouraging smile, is portrayed as a pillar of strength who knows all the answers and can be counted on in times of crisis. For instance, studying Marxism at an institute in Vienna, she is severely beaten in an attack on the institute by Nazis. It only strengthens her dedication and determination in the fight against fascism.

The Lillian we see is much more realistic. She is a person with identifiable childhood fears. For example, Lillian and Julia as young girls are on a camping trip and come across a small waterfall. The only way over is to walk across a fallen log.

Julia tauntingly runs across, almost daring the water to swallow her up. Lillian, however, stops. She realizes the possibility of falling. Only with the help of Julia is she able to make it across.

How then, when they are grown, can Julia ask Lillian her best friend to risk her life smuggling 50,000 dollars into Nazi Germany to aid Jewish and political prisoners? The answer is in the question.

Joanne Fisher

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Most books about company finance are written and aimed at management to enable them to run their businesses more efficiently and profitably. They are written in a language and style which only a professional training or background would enable you to understand.

We have for a long time waited for a book like 'Account for Yourself' which has been written in a simple style and in very clear terms for a working class audience.

The book starts with an explanation of the different types of enterprises in Ireland from Private Businesses to Co-operatives and describes their legal requirements as regards liability and disclosures. The next section deals with the sources of information and this, for me, is the most interesting section in the book. It lays out in a very clear way where to go to find information. Thus, for example, it mentions the Companies Office where annual returns and details of share holding and other information is filed; Thom's Commercial Directory; Who Owns Whom, Trade Union Information and the Information Centre for Commerce and Technology. The latter is a centre at 106 Capel St, Dublin 1 which is extremely useful to trade unionists looking for company information.

It keeps files on all the major companies which include annual accounts, newspaper cuttings and house magazines. It has provisions for photo-copying material and also operates a telephone and postal enquiry service (Telephone number is: 741940). Even if you are not in dispute, it is worth a visit to see what your company is up to.

REFORMS

Almost all the second half of the book is taken up with developments of reforms in Company Law in Britain and Ireland. Inexplicably, 35 pages are devoted to the Sandilands report on Inflation accountancy and its implications. This detail on company law and its reform is one of the weaknesses of the book. What started out as a handbook for workers ends up as a contribution to the debate on reforms and the harmonisation of Ireland's and EEC's Company Law.

It therefore, becomes too much of a textbook and not enough of a manual for workers who want to understand and fight a system which continually attempts to conceal, baffle and mystify. For all that I recommend that you read the book. It could repay both yourself and the brothers and sisters that you work with.

PAUL O'BRIEN

THE GREAT SELL OUT

Nationalism and Socialism in Twentieth Century Ireland.

E.R. Rumpf A.C. Hephurn. Liverpool U. Press.

DESPITE ITS weakness, this is an important book for Irish socialists insofar as it is an attempt to scientifically investigate Irish nationalism from the War of Independence through the Civil War and the period of the Cumann na Gaedhal government to the Fianna Fail era (1932-1948.) The book is a translation of Rumpf's original work in German, which was published in 1959. Some of its material has been re-written and updated by Hephurn and a chapter on Northern Ireland has been added. In examining the major events throughout history, Rumpf refuses to analyse these political phenomena in terms of their own rhetoric but tries to trace their social structural and geographical origins.

Rumpf is at his best in analysing the post-treaty split. He looks behind the ideological minutiae differentiating De Valera's Document No 2 and the treaty settlement to discover how: "concealed undercurrents, hidden differences in the hopes and aspirations of Irish society became suddenly and sharply apparent". His geographical analysis shows the concentration of the War of Independence in Cork, Kerry, Clare, Tipperary and Limerick which were all counties characterised by dairy farming and marketing co-ops. On the Civil War, he notes that it was mainly fought in Connaught and Munster and that the Western small farmers continued to vote Republican while the relatively more prosperous Munster farmers sought peace.

He is also very interesting in his examination of the role played by the underground bureaucracy of the "revolutionary" Dail in suppressing land agitation and ensuring that class conflict would not disrupt "national self-discipline".

He also, for example, argues that because of its 'small size' and 'isolation' Ireland didn't have an 'urge to dominate international politics'. This reflects a general tendency throughout the book to explain political issues by an over-emphasis on geographical factors.

His failure to examine the specific contents of different political ideologies is best expressed in the very general contrast he draws between Free State 'pragmatism' and Republican 'romantic idealism'. Rumpf sees this romantic idealism as a direct consequence of the 'economic backwardness' and shelter from 'worldly pressures' that characterise for him the small farmers of the West. But this 'practical/romantic' dichotomy doesn't explain much. Rumpf does not tell us why the 'worldly pressures' that western farmers are 'sheltered from' inclined other parts of the country to take a more moderate or practical view. The implied insight that there is a correlation between the forms of Republican and nationalist ideology that dominate Irish political debate and the underdeveloped nature of Irish capitalism is smothered over by vague and hazy notions like 'remote economic situation' and 'worldly pressures'.

The use of loose and imprecise concepts mars the work throughout. It is particularly clear in Hephurn's chapter on Northern Ireland which neglects to analyse the nature of the conflicting ideologies. Thus Hephurn argues that the UDA maintained its para-military stance "rather than risk being ensnared down what seems to be the blind alley of social questions as the Official IRA and for a time the Democratic Unionists have been". He also draws the conclusion that middle class nationalism that is in power in the North and the South has been most effectively challenged by one that has a more cruder and more extreme appeal. He claims that "whether such appeals have been characterised by their opponents as 'fascist' or 'communist', they have a great deal in common in appealing against prevailing national orthodoxy to men of little or no property". That, of course, is to concentrate on the purely formal similarities and explains nothing. It is rather an attempt to equate both political ideologies by characterising them as both 'extreme' and ignores the content of each.



1922—and de Valera reviews anti-Treaty IRA units: but his Republicanism always contained the seeds of betrayal

The theoretical weaknesses of the book do not detract from its many relevant insights and interesting facts. It is a contrast to the depressing banality of most other work on modern Irish political history. And that contrast points to a lesson for Irish socialists. The lack of any really worked out and coherent theoretical explanation of Irish history is not just a problem for academics but also one for Marxists. For as Brian Trench pointed out in a previous issue of *INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM*: "a Marxists analysis of contemporary Irish society, of its economic and social structures of power and ideology has yet to be done, Marxism in Ireland is quotes from Connolly plus some populist phrases".

And another consequence of this illustrates the old proverb that nature abhors a vacuum. In the absence of a scientific analysis of power and ideology in Irish society, alternative and simplistic theories will be put forward. Thus when Noel Browne notes that the Labour Party cannot be an instrument for change, his argument is that: "As in the other two parties, with the exception of a short radical phase in Fianna Fail in the thirties, party politics has been the means whereby personally ambitious men and women achieved the realisation of their own personality needs through recognition in society at various levels" (Hibernia Dec. 3rd 1975). Leaving aside the ambiguity of Fianna Fail's 'radicalism' which Browne (as well as Rumpf) misses, the point is that here is an argument that presumably Irish politics can be explained in terms of the 'personality needs' of political leaders. And if that is one's theory, one cannot come up with a strategy for socialism but end up being forced into a game of personal abuse of one's opponents.

DECLAN O'CONNELL



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